



Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

My name is Odalis Aguilar Aguilar and I am a political coordinator at Oregon AFSCME. Our union represents over 39,000 workers across the state in both public and private sectors and we believe in economic and social justice for all Oregon workers and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and today I wanted to share concerns over SB 748, this would allow the Employment Department to require drug testing for an initial claim for unemployment benefits if the claimant was fired by the claimant's most recent employer for unlawful drug use.

In the 1930's, Congress enacted an unemployment insurance program as part of the Social Security Act (SSA) which provides grants to states with unemployment insurance laws that meet federal requirements for administering unemployment insurance and overseeing benefit payments. The goal of unemployment insurance is to provide relief for workers while they navigate at times, the hardest part of their lives.

SB 748 creates a cycle of harm where people will find themselves and this additional barrier to a social benefit will have a ripple effect. We all know the cost of living has gone up exponentially and it's harder and harder to make ends meet. We hear from our members everyday how they're struggling to keep their lights on and their families fed, some even have to work multiple jobs to sustain themselves and their families.

Access to unemployment insurance not only allows workers to maintain their stability by providing partial wage replacement, but also softens economic slowdowns. Unemployment insurance is important in recession recovery because it helps prevent sharp drops in consumer spending—one of many tools in preventing possible full-scale economic depressions.

Oregon AFSCME has grave concerns over this bill as it would further stigmatize workers for failing a drug test and generate further instability when workers are already struggling to stay afloat. While we appreciate the work put into this bill, we are unclear as to what problem this seeks to address but urge that this bill does not move forward in the process at this point in time.